

BEFORE THE  
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

RECEIVED  
JUN 4 4 01 PM '01  
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Complaint on Sunday  
and Holiday Collections

Docket No. C2001-1

OBJECTION OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
TO CARLSON INTERROGATORIES DFC/USPS-19 - 21  
(June 4, 2001)

On May 25, 2001, DFC/USPS-19 was filed. On May 29, 2001, DFC/USPS-20 and 21 were filed. All three interrogatories request information either from or regarding the Collection Box Management System. As discussed below, the Postal Service objects to responding to each of the interrogatories.

As a preliminary matter, it should be noted that the scope of this proceeding is limited to collection and mailing processing services provided on holidays. Discovery in this case should not be converted into a fishing expedition on postal operations practices generally. The Postal Service will object to responding to any questions that lack a clear and direct nexus to *holiday* collection and mail processing matters. All three of the interrogatories in question suffer from this infirmity.

DFC/USPS-19

The question reads as follows:

**DFC/USPS-19.** Please provide the following information, in files in Microsoft Excel or similar format, from the Collection Box Management System database for every collection box in the United States that is in the database: location ID number, box address, description of address, service class, type of box, area of box, posted weekday collection times, posted Saturday collection times, and posted holiday collection times.

This question marks the latest in Mr. Carlson's attempts to gain access to information in the Collection Box Management System (CBMS) database. Those attempts include the initiation of federal court litigation under the Freedom of Information Act. It is the view of the Postal Service that disclosure of information which is tantamount to disclosure of the carrier's line of travel and schedule when engaged in collection activities poses potential security risks both to the safety of our employees, and to the security of the mail. It is further the view of the Postal Service that disclosure of line of travel and schedule information, in the form of a comprehensive database that aggregates in one place massive amounts of information of a commercial nature, would not constitute good business practice. The Postal Service has expressed these views in the context of Mr. Carlson's requests for similar information on a much more geographically limited scale (e.g., one small metropolitan area).<sup>1</sup> The Postal Service continues to adhere to these views, and finds them to be even more compelling in the circumstances of a request for such information for every collection box in the entire country. The Postal Service objects to question 19 on the grounds that the requested information is not appropriate for public disclosure.

Perhaps more critical for purposes of evaluating this particular discovery request, however, is the fundamental irrelevance of the requested information to the topic of this proceeding. Even on its face, the level of disaggregation of the requested information

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on the totality of circumstances in that instance, the Postal Service chose earlier this year to provide Mr. Carlson CBMS data he had requested pertaining to one small metropolitan area. That exercise of discretion by the Postal Service, however, should not be interpreted as an alteration of its broader views regarding the fundamental unsuitability of such information for general public disclosure.

goes well beyond anything that could be remotely useful in examining what are purported to be nationwide service matters. Given that there are hundreds of thousands of collection boxes nationwide, it is absurd to contemplate that box-by-box scrutiny of collection information would be a viable mode of analysis. It is as if Mr. Carlson were seeking weapons of mass destruction for the alleged purpose of killing ants.

Probably the most telling factor in confirming the irrelevance of the information in this database, however, is one that may not be quite so apparent. As noted above, this proceeding is limited to issues of holiday service. Of the nine fields of information requested by Mr. Carlson for each collection box, only the last one, posted holiday collection times, could even conceivably shed any light on holiday service. In fact, though, as Mr. Carlson is *probably already aware*, that field in the overwhelming majority of cases will not shed any light on anything. As it turns out, for 99 percent of the boxes in the database, the holiday field is blank. (It is expected that the reasons for this will be addressed in the response to DFC/USPS-3.) In other words, whatever may be the collateral consequences of application of the weapons of mass destruction that Mr. Carlson is seeking, 99 percent of the ants he is allegedly trying to kill are impervious to them.

Lastly, Mr. Carlson has requested that the information from the database be provided to him in a format such as Excel. The information he has requested, however, exists on a mainframe computer. Not only would it be unduly burdensome to convert the information from its current format to the format he has requested, but it would be unduly burdensome even to undertake the effort of attempting to determine the exact

magnitude of the burden. The analysis would require the development of a process by which the necessary steps in a feasible conversion procedure could be identified and quantified. The Postal Service has no resources available for such an effort.

The Postal Service has no intention of handing over to Mr. Carlson, in a proceeding he has purportedly initiated to address holiday service matters, nationwide information from the CBMS of the type that he has long sought in other contexts. That information is privileged and would be unduly burdensome to produce. It is, moreover, fundamentally irrelevant to the issues in this proceeding.

DFC/USPS-20

The question seeks the operating manual for the CBMS database, and any other documents which explain its operations and functions. This question is clearly posed as part of a fishing expedition to obtain general information with no direct nexus to the issue of holiday service. Not only does it lack relevance, but there may be higher level documents regarding the operation of the system which would not be publicly disclosed under good business practices, and therefore are commercially sensitive.

DFC/USPS-21

This question seeks further information about CBMS. First, it asks for confirmation of the output data included in routine reports on individual routes, and a sample printout. Next, it asks about electronic and hard-copy record retention. Lastly, in subpart (e), it asks for a description of any reports at the district, area, or headquarters level based on the analysis of the routine data reported by the system.

Once again, this question is clearly posed as part of a fishing expedition to obtain general information with no direct nexus to the issue of holiday service. For

example, in the final portion of the question requesting information about reports, no attempt whatsoever is made to limit the request to reports relating to holiday service. Instead, the broadest possible net has been cast to sweep up as much information as possible, regardless of any potential relevance to this proceeding. The Postal Service objects on the grounds of relevance.

In addition, the Postal Service objects to the final portion of the question, subpart (e), *on the grounds of undue burden. The Postal Service has almost one hundred district and area offices. The only way to find out with certainty what types of reports they might have generated analyzing CBMS data would be to survey each one. Moreover, given the breadth of the question, there would probably be substantial time and effort devoted to responding to inquiries from individual offices regarding whether specific individual reports fall within or outside the scope of the question. It seems obvious the burden involved would require many weeks of effort, on the part of those initiating the inquiry from headquarters, and on the part of those in the field offices attempting to respond. Even were this burden undertaken, moreover, there is no reason to believe that any of the information produced would necessarily have any bearing on the limited matters before the Commission in this proceeding. The substantial burden involved, therefore, would be entirely unwarranted.*

Therefore, the Postal Service objects to DFC/USPS-19 - 21 on the grounds stated above.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By its attorneys:

Daniel J. Foucheaux  
Chief Counsel  
Ratemaking



---

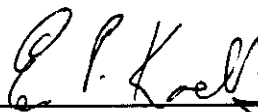
Eric P. Koetting  
Attorney

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that, in accordance with section 12 of the Rules of Practice, I have this day served the foregoing document upon:

Douglas F. Carlson  
P.O. Box 7868  
Santa Cruz CA 95061-7868

David B. Popkin  
P.O. Box 528  
Englewood NJ 07631-0528



---

Eric P. Koetting

475 L'Enfant Plaza West, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20260-1137  
(202) 268-2992/ FAX: -5402  
June 4, 2001